



Trail Talk

Mission Trails Regional Park Trail Guide Program

Trail Talk Volume 14, Issue 4

Poison Oak and Fine Oriental Lacquer Ware by Wayne Cherry, Trail Guide

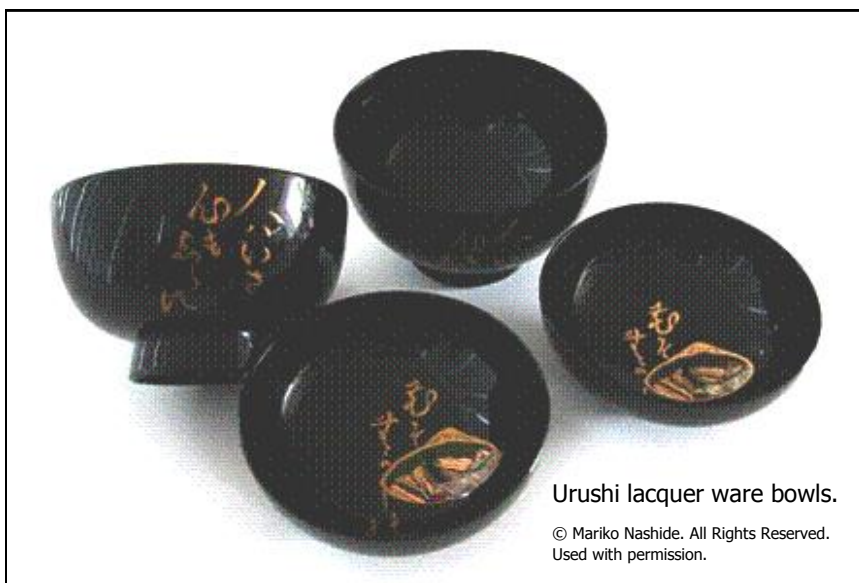
Several species of plants in Mission Trails Regional Park, including Lemonadeberry, Laurel Sumac, and Poison Oak, belong to the Cashew family, the Anacardiaceae. Besides the plants in Mission Trails, other well known members are cashews, pistachios, mangoes and the Brazilian Pepper Tree. Among the characteristics of this family are inconspicuous flowers, resin canals in the vascular

system and sap that is resinous or milky and often toxic. Widespread in the sap of the Anacardiaceae are toxic compounds related to catechols, the most well known being urushiols. Urushiols all have the same basic structure but differ slightly in the degree of unsaturation of a side chain.

It is a urushiol, present in significant amounts in poison oak, that causes the severe skin irritation. Urushiols are present in

let it be."

But, there's more: The name "urushiol" comes from urushi, a Japanese term for lacquer that comes from the



Urushi lacquer ware bowls.

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much lower amounts in cashews, mangoes, and pistachios and Mission Trails plants, but even in small amounts can cause irritation in sensitive individuals. Most Trail Guides are aware of this information that provides a useful "Trail Tale" that probably often ends with "leaflets of three,

sap of the kiurushi tree or lacquer tree, *Toxicodendron vernicifluum*. Kiurushi trees grow in regions of China, Japan, and Korea. The process and art of using urushiol lacquer is very ancient and may have developed first in China and then spread first to Korea and

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Writers wanted...

- Have an interesting story or photo you'd like to share with other Trail Guides? Send them to 'Trail Talk' editor Millie Basden at trailtalkeditor@yahoo.com. Please include "Trail Talk" in the subject line!

Speakers Needed...

- Have you heard an interesting speaker or know an interesting topic that would be appropriate for one of our monthly meetings? If so, please send your ideas to Brian or Ondina Moehl.



Next Trail Guide
Monthly Meeting:

Wednesday,
April 14th

6:30 pm—

Visitor Center
Classroom

Time to Update Trail Guide Directory

If your name, phone number, mailing address, or email address has changed during the past year, please make sure Fred has the updated information for inclusion in the new directory to be issued in April. He needs the information no later than April 18th.

Monthly Meeting Minutes—March 10, 2010

There were 20 Trail Guides, 3 guests, and Ranger Heidi in attendance.

Fred's number for March was 70,200. The answer in the form of a question is "How much water in cubic feet per second flowed in the San Diego River during the largest flood?" This number was in Millie Basden's article in the March *Trail Talk* and came from Philip Pryde's book on the San Diego Region. The record was set in January 1916, undoubtedly during the "Hatfield Floods." Fred noted that since El Capitan Dam was completed in 1935 and San Vicente in 1943, flow rates this high are unlikely unless both dams are overtopped.

Fred reminded Trail Guides to sign up for walks and record the number of visitors and some interesting observations from the walk, including how visitors learned about the walk.

Fred announced the prize winner for the best walk write-up in February: Steve Haiman, Wayne Cherry, and Nancy Conyers for their special walk on February 9.

Ranger Heidi discussed a question she

had received recently about the safety of women walking alone in Mission Trails. She said the standard guidance is for people not to hike alone for a variety of safety reasons. She further added that if you do go alone, you should definitely take a cell phone and some sort of self-defense item (like pepper spray or a walking stick). She said it's also a good idea to let someone know your plans—where you are hiking and when you plan to return—so we know where to look for you in case you don't.

Fred announced that Senior Ranger Tracey Walker had transferred to Tri-Canyon Parks (with headquarters at Tecolote) as their new senior ranger and that Rick Thompson had taken the senior ranger position at Mission Trails. Rick had been an MTRP ranger from 1999–2003.

There was a discussion about the large number of Trail Guide walks being signed up for far in advance, making it difficult for other Trail Guides to find walks to lead that fit into their schedules. Fred suggested a policy that Trail Guides could only sign up for two regu-

lar walks (the 9:30 a.m. VC walks or the 8:30 a.m. KLC walks) in any future month. Once that month came, however, then it would be first come, first served, as it has been in the past with all walks. This restriction would not apply to special walks. This policy was discussed, and there was general agreement it would be good to try.

Fred mentioned that he and Ranger Heidi were still working up some of the discovery table ideas brainstormed at the January meeting.

Program was a presentation on MTRP reptiles by Dr. Brad Hollingsworth from the San Diego Natural History Museum as part of Trail Guide training.

Upcoming Events:

Wildlife Tracking Walk with Bob MacDonald, Saturday, April 3, 8:30–10:30 a.m. Meet at Kumeyaay Lake Campground entry station.

The next meeting is April 14, 2010, 6:30 p.m. in the Visitor Center classrooms. The program is TBD.

Respectfully submitted,

Fred Kramer, Acting Secretary



Reminder: An 800 Mhz radio must be carried on walks from the Visitor Center starting and ending while the VC is open. For other walks, carry a cell phone. Be sure to return the radio to the cabinet after your walk. They are not to be taken home!

Ranger Heidi will be providing radio training at the April meeting.

Poison Oak and Fine Oriental Lacquer Ware

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then to Japan. But very old lacquer ware from Japan (400 BCE) indicates that the technology may have been independently developed in Japan or imported from Japan to China.

To make urushi lacquer, the sap is collected from cuts in the bark of 10 year old trees. The toxic and irritating raw material is filtered and heat treated and may have pigments added before application to the object to be

lacquered. Craftsmen use care in handling urushi, because even its vapor is just as nasty as the urushiol in Mission Trails poison oak and can cause serious health problems.

Application of urushi can be very time consuming, needing many applications and drying times, but when it polymerizes in a warm, humid environment, it creates a very hard, durable, water-proof finish that can be pigmented or clear and polished to a high gloss. Urushi is also used as a very strong

adhesive. Hardened, cured urushi usually does not cause reactions. Objects traditionally coated with urushi include plates, bowls, musical instruments, traditional Japanese bows (archery), jewelry and fountain pens and coffins.

For the Trail Guides who don't already know about the other qualities of urushiol, the story about *T. vernicifluum* and urushiol having a meaningful use, and should be a good addition to their book of "Trail Tales."

Welcome to Our New Trail Guide Graduates

I'm pleased to announce that we've had another successful Trail Guide Training Class this year with 34 new Trail Guides graduating on Saturday morning, March 27. I would like to congratulate all the students. As usual, they studied hard, completed the walkthroughs and written final exam, and, most of all, enjoyed the class. They will be a great addition to our Trail Guide Program!

I would like to thank the entire training team for their outstanding efforts that made this year's class a success. Team members are: Bill Howell, Wendy Esterly, Judy Alvarez, Dave Bailey, Bill White, Fred & Linda Kramer, and, of course, Ranger Heidi. —Fred Kramer



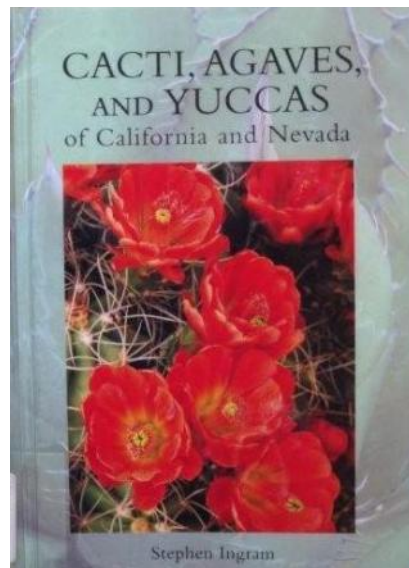
Top row (l to r): Audrey Baker, Karen Randall, Pat Pawlowski, Jan Corbett, Jim Corbett, Rose Clark, Mike Messner, Lynda Messner, Bill Bleicher, Larry Guillen; middle row (l to r): Jen Douglas, Lilian Cooper, Kathy Collier, Tasha Shyko, Frank Arias III, Gloria Verdieu, Jan Hartwig, Joanie Brosnan, Carma Ricks, Karen Ibach, Christine McCoy, Maureen Blackhall; bottom row (l to r): Jon Hoidal, Jo Mink, Eloise Battle, Margot Linback, Fran Simon, Marcia Stoner, Stacey Miller, Mary Horner, Michele Ruppert, Edel Hayhurst. Not pictured: Lee Clark and Sheila Dawson. Photo by Wendy Esterly

Book Review: *Cacti, Agaves, and Yuccas of California and Nevada* by Chris Axtmann, Trail Guide

The figure is staggering: 196. That's the number of sources in the bibliography list of *Cacti, Agaves, and Yuccas of California and Nevada* by Stephen Ingram. I checked this book out at the County Library (583.5609794 ING) while researching plants for our backyard and was pleasantly surprised to find many interesting facts that apply to our Trail Guide naturalist training. The author, Stephen Ingram, is a native Californian with a B.S. in biology and an M.A. in botany, with years of experience in research, surveys and consulting. Visit his website at www.ingramphoto.com where his bio quotes him: "One of my main goals is to enable people to better appreciate plants and their native habitats, and in so doing, facilitate the preservation of those plants and habitats and associated wildlife." A noteworthy task, Ingram succeeds in combining scientific accuracy with sharp, colorful images to "fill the gap between highly technical publications that may not appeal to the general audience and field guides that don't allow room to discuss the natural history of their botanical subjects." Trail Guides will appreciate the prevailing conservationist tone.

The book begins with evolution, classification and adaptation. Rich in geographic history to explain origin, dispersion and diversity, the guide addresses the plant orders first. In a language easily understood, he breaks the families down to species which are later profiled. He gives excellent information on succulence and night-time photosynthesis, and amazing facts about root, spine and flower adaptations to survive arid

environments. Ever marvel at the brilliant color of cactus flowers? Ultraviolet betalain pigments. He defines monocots (agaves and



yuccas) vs. eudicots (cacti), and clearly dissects the anatomy of their flowers and defines the pollinators.

The next section focuses on geologic forces and climate change that influenced specification of vegetation. His narrative on the plants' ecological relationships with other plants and animals is a terrific read, complemented with inset boxes on our Trail Guide favorites: packrats, yucca moths, hybridization (diversity) and invasive aliens.

In the species profile chapter, Ingram seeks to "give readers a deeper picture of these plants and perhaps an increased awareness of their ecological relationships and environments." He provides common and Latin names, lists identifying characteristics, includes a location map and writes five or six interesting paragraphs. Trail Guides will benefit from occasional reference to a plant's —oecious.

Each species includes beautiful photographs taken by the author with a rule of three per subject: macro, portrait and landscape with a goal to visually provide a sense of place or habitat. Watercolor illustrations by two talented botanists from past and present artistically detail a species in each genus.

Ingram leads the reader with their new knowledge into a chapter on conservation and cultivation with practical horticultural advice. He wraps up with a chapter of discovery, profiling places that offer the best opportunities for viewing our native cacti, agave and yuccas in their natural environment.

Very thorough, this guide includes eight appendices, a key to the genera, a glossary, an index, and the staggering bibliography. I would certainly recommend this book to any naturalist.

Cacti, Agaves, and Yuccas of California and Nevada

By Stephen Ingram

First edition, May 2009, 243 pages

\$25.95 Cachuma Press, Los Olivos, California

ISBN 978-0-9789971-0-6

www.cachumapress.com

What's Happening at the Park

Friday, April 9...

Stars at Mission Trails—Join members of the San Diego Astronomy Association from sunset to 10 p.m. at the Kumeyaay Lake Campground's Day Use Parking Lot. Telescopes available (weather permitting.)

Saturday, April 10...

SunStride 5K & 10K Hike/Run/Walk—The event begins in the Equestrian Staging Area and will involve most of the trails in the East Fortuna Mountain area of the park. Additional information at www.sunstrides.org

Saturday, April 17...

Guided Bird Walk—Join resident birder and Trail Guide Jeanne Raimond for an adventure in bird watching! This month: Old Mission Dam—meet in the OMD parking lot. 8 a.m. to 10 a.m.

Star Party—Join resident stargazer and Trail Guide George Varga to view the night time sky. Meet at the far end of the Kumeyaay Lake Campground Day Use Parking Lot. 7-10 p.m. (weather permitting.)

Sunday, April 18...

Concert in the Park—The San Diego Clarinet Quartet will perform from 2-3 p.m. in the Visitor Center Amphitheater (indoors if inclement weather.)

Saturday, April 24...

Birding Basics—Resident birder Winona Sollock will teach 5 simple techniques for identifying birds at a glance. 1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m., Visitor Center.

Saturday, May 1...

Tracking Walk—Learn the art of discovering signs left behind by resident creatures with Trail Guide and Tracking Team member Mike Gibbs. Meet at the Kumeyaay Lake Campground, 8:30 a.m.—10:30 a.m.



The trees around the visitor center have been a favorite roosting spot recently for a red-tailed hawk. Seen by many trail guides over the course of several weeks, this red-tailed hawk has the banded tail of an immature bird. —Photo by George Varga



I think that no matter how old or infirm I may become, I will always plant a large garden in the spring. Who can resist the feelings of hope and joy that one gets from participating in nature's rebirth?

~ Edward Giobbi, American Artist



If you can't do a walk you signed-up for, arrange for someone to take your place or let Fred or Ranger Heidi know you won't be there.

Mission Trails Regional Park Trail Guide Program

President—Fred Kramer
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Trail Talk Distribution—Ed Bailey
Trail Talk Photographer—Wendy Esterly



The Trail Guide Program is dedicated to provide the visiting public with education and understanding of the unique environmental and historical attributes of Mission Trails Regional Park. The Trail Guides supplement the Park Rangers in outreach programs to the public.

Contact Information:

MTRP Visitor Center—619-668-3281

Ranger Heidi Gutknecht—619-668-3279

Fred Kramer—fred.kramer@cox.net

Millie Basden—trailtalkeditor@yahoo.com

Tom Walters—twalters@ucsd.edu

Brian Moehl—bmoehl@att.net

Ondina Moehl—olsummers@hotmail.com